



Guideline for Influenza Prevention Through Hand Washing and Other Measures

The purpose of this guideline is to emphasize and further clarify prevention measures to help reduce the transmission of H1N1 (swine flu) and seasonal flu.

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes, often referred to as “droplet spread”. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby or onto surfaces that other people touch.

During the flu season, you can use simple actions to help protect yourself and others from becoming sick. Penn State, like other Colleges and Universities, has taken a multi-faceted approach to decrease the spread of flu within our community. These measures include strategies to manage those with flu-like illnesses; promotion of self-isolation at home by non-resident students, faculty and staff; considerations for high-risk students and staff; communications plans to encourage proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette; routine cleaning; and vaccination plans for seasonal flu and H1N1 (when available). It is through the implementation of this combination that the spread of flu among our community can be best decreased.

Although no single action protects completely, hand washing is one of the most important and effective methods of preventing diseases such as the flu. If used together, the steps below, under the current flu conditions, can help reduce the chances of becoming infected:

- Wash your hands with soap and water. Make it FAST, FOAMY and FURIOUS for 15-20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand cleaners (also known as “sanitizers”) can be used.
- Wash periodically during the work day and after possible contact with contaminated surfaces.
- Wash before any activity that involves putting your fingers in or near your mouth or eyes.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or with your arm when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.

It is the foaming action of the soap and water, together with hand rubbing action that helps loosen dirt, viruses and bacteria from the hands and flushes them down the drain. The use of sanitizers provides no benefit over standard soap and water. In many cases, sanitizers are not recommended, such as when hands are visibly dirty and in food service situations. In healthcare settings, it is standard practice for hand sanitizers to be available for use throughout the facility

based on the nature of the work. Hand sanitizers must contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective; check the label for product contents.

There are a number of University activities and facilities which involve large numbers of individuals who frequently touch common surfaces. These areas benefit most from immediate access to alcohol-based sanitizers, even though soap and water may be present in the building. Examples would be an area with large numbers of computers available for student and public use, fitness facilities or vehicles which are the employee's primary work area. It is only these uses where the purchase of hand sanitizers is recommended and could be purchased with University funds. Normal office situations do not warrant the need for hand sanitizers.

Other steps to prevent disease transmission include:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Don't share utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items
- Get a seasonal flu shot
- Get the H1N1 vaccination when available

Purchase and installation considerations for hand sanitizing units are:

- The unit or containers must be free-standing; no wall installations are allowed.
- The unit must be located where product spills will not pose a safety risk or damage walls or floors.
- Departments or work units shall be responsible for funding the installation, maintenance and restocking of the product.
- Any unused, defective, dirty or unsightly units will be removed by the Office of Physical Plant or maintenance staff at non-University Park locations.

References:

www.flu.gov

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

www.cdc.gov/handhygiene

www.ed.gov

www.who.it

www.dsf.health.state.pa.us

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